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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the significance of facilities preservation for educational facilities planning and identifies various forms of facilities preservation applicable to educational facilities. It analyzes why educational facilities planners need to be aware of preservation considerations, reviews the relevant literature for preservation principles, identifies alternative preservation strategies, and highlights preservation practices in Virginia and their relationship to educational facilities preservation. Basic management principles for incorporating a preservation policy include: (1) coordinate the preservation activity within the community's master plan; (2) consider using outside professional help in preparing a brochure for advertising the available property; (3) consider explicit incorporation of a preservation component in the school system's long-range capital plan; and (4) recognize the key role of the local government in zoning and land use controls. Virginia state laws are not extensive or comprehensive; compared with other states, the state government does not empower its localities to offer strong preservation protections. In conclusion, when educational facilities planners develop a master plan for an older facility or plan for the acquisition of additional space, they should consider options other than simple disposal or new construction. Contains 14 references. (LMI)

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Preservation Impacts

On Educational Facilities Planning

By James A. Shultz

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Preservation Impacts on Educational Facilities Planning

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine the significance of facilities preservation for educational facilities planning and to identify examples of various forms of facilities preservation applicable to educational facilities. The paper was prepared by analyzing why educational facilities planners need to be aware of preservation considerations, by reviewing relevant literature for principles to be considered in preservation, by identifying alternative preservation strategies and examples of major strategies, and by highlighting preservation practices in Virginia and how they might relate to educational facilities preservation.

Importance of Preservation Considerations

Facilities preservation is an intentional effort to maintain or restore an older facility to its approximate original appearance and condition. For preservation to be effective or come into play, the original use of the facility does not have to be retained, only its physical attributes. For example, facilities planners might make use of preservation strategies for the sale or lease of a facility for a purpose other than education. The sale or lease, however, may still have benefit for the school district or educational institution by providing financial returns and by maintaining a facility that has community pride and ownership.

The major master planning steps followed before reaching any significant decisions about educational facilities may indicate that a preservation option is the most appropriate. This could involve preservation of an existing facility for continued educational use or preservation for the purpose of effectively disposing of or releasing a

facility. The master planning process may recommend that educational program requirements can be met very adequately in an older facility.

Often, financial considerations are important. It may be financially more feasible to restore and renovate an existing facility than build a new, replacement facility. Or, it may be financially attractive to sell or lease an older facility for alternative uses. Finally, community needs and interests may influence preservation considerations in the master planning process. Frequently there is strong community desire to maintain older facilities for their historic and symbolic value. Preservation impacts are important because these recycling decisions have been faced many times in the history of modern American public education and because school consolidation trends have freed up many older facilities either for creative preservation and re-use or for discard and demolition. Since 1930 the number of facilities occupied by elementary and secondary systems in the United States has declined from about 260,000 to 85,000 (Carlson, 1991, pp. 7-8).

Preservation Principles and Examples of Major Alternatives

As the master planning process is completed on each existing facility that is being evaluated, several conclusions are possible:

- Continue to use for the same or modified educational purpose;
- Retain and convert to non-instructional use;
- Sell or lease the land and/or building;
- Mothball and put final decision on hold for a time;
- Demolish the facility.

If a district or institution has or anticipates having several older facilities up for re-consideration as viable educational facilities, it may need to prepare and maintain a facilities and asset management plan, rather than just examine and make decisions on each facility in isolation (Carlson, 1991). For each facility such a plan could include an assessment of:

- Age and condition;
- Importance to neighborhood;
- Location;
- Potential for conversion to other uses;
- Short, medium and long range projections of school age population;
- Review and revise the plan periodically.

Before a final decision is reached on the disposition of an older facility, and especially when mothballing or demolition seem to be the only alternatives, a sale or lease should be considered. The advantages to selling the land or a building may be:

- It is the only practical way of disposal;
- Takes away an administrative and maintenance burden;
- Income realized immediately;
- A relatively simple, one-time action.

Advantages to leasing property no longer needed by the educational system may be:

- May offer flexibility of use to both owner and potential lessee;
- Total income over time may be greater than income from sale;

- School system maintains control for potential future use and some control over interim use;
- Provides a long-term income stream.

There are three principle alternatives for older facility use in which preservation could become an important factor: 1) the school system decides to preserve an older facility and use it for educational or non-educational purposes; 2) the school system decides to release a facility through a sale, lease or property exchange, but puts priority on preserving the basic appearance and structure of the facility; and 3) the school system purchases or leases older non-educational facilities not previously owned by the system and preserves them for educational or support use.

Because it is the most common form of educational facility-related preservation, the literature documents many examples of school systems and institutions preserving their own older facilities for continued educational or support use (Chambers, 1989-90; English, 1987; Jordan, 1991; Park, 1989; Rist, 1990). A representative example is Norfolk, Virginia's Maury High School, originally built in 1911. In a preservation, restoration, renovation and expansion project completed in 1988, the facility's exterior facade and ornamentation was restored to its original appearance (Rist, 1990).

As noted above, the master planning analysis of space adequacy and financial feasibility may lead to a conclusion that an older facility cannot be maintained as educational or support space. However, many urban and forward-looking school systems are finding ways to gain financial return or needed space as well as preserve historically important or community-valued facilities through controlled leasing, managed sales, and property exchanges (Carlson, 1991; Rapley & Carroll, 1984). In the 1980's Washington, D. C., public schools decided to preserve rather than demolish two facilities

which stand side by side and were originally constructed in the 1800's. The school system entered into a lease agreement with a private developer, who restored the exteriors and converted the interiors into office space for leasing. The developer is paying for the renovation and operating costs, and the school district will begin receiving $1.3 million per year after up-front restoration and financial costs are covered by the developer's income (Carlson, 1991).

An example of property exchange to expand space was implemented by Arlington County, Virginia, public schools. It gained needed space in a location in which it had to expand and contributed to preservation of historic educational facilities by exchanging a school built in the 1920's for a larger facility formerly occupied by a non-profit sheltered workshop (Carlson, 1991).

Probably the most infrequent application of preservation in educational facility planning, but maybe the most challenging, is occupation and preservation of older facilities not originally constructed as educational buildings and not formerly owned by the school system or educational institution. This may be the best example, however, of educational enterprises showing the community their support of the values underlying preservation and demonstrating how educational purposes and objectives can be met in a preservation context.

An application of this is presently under way in higher education in the University of Washington system. A new branch of the University is being created in Tacoma, Washington, primarily using existing warehouse and similar structures built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Tacoma's downtown "Union Station" district (University of Washington, 1993). To ensure preservation of culturally valuable structures, in the 1980's the City of Tacoma established a conservation district in the Union Station area and passed a special review historic district ordinance. University planning for

restoration and renovation of existing buildings and planned new facilities on the Tacoma Campus must incorporate the City's historic and conservation design guidelines in areas such as building height, scale, materials, maintenance, storefront design, awnings, and signs (Morris, 1992, pp. 20-21).

Factors to Consider and Tools Used in Preservation Planning and Management

If a school system intends to incorporate a preservation philosophy where possible in the use and disposal of its facilities, there are certain basic considerations and management principles that may be of value. First, a preservation perspective needs to fit within the master planning framework of community interests and needs, as well as the system's capacity to afford and finance preservation activity. Second, when considering disposing of facilities through lease or sale, the system should consider the use of outside professional help in preparing a brochure-type prospectus for advertising the available property, highlighting its features in the most positive light, and stressing the advantages of potential uses and preservation to prospective buyers.

Third, if a school system has a number of older facilities either in use or not in use, it should consider explicitly incorporating a preservation component or section in its long range capital plan, dedicating specific attention and a certain portion of the capital budget to preservation (Westbrook, 1992). Fourth, a school system or institution must recognize the key role of local government in preservation considerations, through its zoning and land use control powers, especially when selling or leasing older facilities. It is important for facilities planners to work closely with local officials and understand the local zoning ordinances and other potential controls over facilities use so they can be in a position to understand and represent both the positive and negative aspects of these limitations when promoting the sale or lease of school property.

To understand and promote the potential attractiveness of older school property for prospective buyers or lessees, and to appreciate the full range of issues related to possible acquisition and preservation of older property for school use, the educational facility planner needs to know about more than just general zoning and land use restrictions. For example, a specific form of zoning, the conservation district or historic district, requires preservation of existing structures in their existing form and restricts changes that can be made (Morris, 1992). If an older, well-preserved facility is in a historic or conservation district, its value may increase because of the protection afforded by the laws of the district. Another form of protection is offered by establishing conservation or historic easements on the land on which historic or preserved facilities stand. The usual way of doing this is to sell or donate the land to a non-profit land trust established for the purpose of preservation. Along with the deed the seller simultaneously establishes and registers an easement, which restricts what can be done with any facility on the land (Diehl & Barrett, 1988).

Potential buyers or lessees who operate for a profit or who are otherwise liable for taxes, including real estate assessments, should also be made aware of possible tax breaks on property acquired in historic or conservation districts or property with similar legal restrictions. Among the possible tax incentives in different areas are federal, state or local tax credits, freezes, moratoria, and abatements on qualified property, and reduced-interest loans backed by federal and other government-sponsored agencies (Robinson & Petersen, 1989). In addition, some federal agencies and most state governments have established preservation-support programs and services, including grants and loans for preservation work and assistance in planning and implementing preservation of historic sites and buildings (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1993).

Support for Facilities Preservation and Preservation Programs in Virginia

Although Virginia is a historic state, its state laws are not extensive or comprehensive in the area of preservation, and it does not empower its localities to offer strong preservation protections and tools compared to some other states. Local governments are permitted to enact historic district ordinances, and about half of the counties and cities in the state have them. In addition, some localities use conservation areas in their zoning plans or use density restrictions to preserve the building and character of particular areas. The state requires all localities to formulate and update five-year comprehensive plans. Many of these plans contain preservation components. State law empowers localities to offer partial property tax exemptions for rehabilitated buildings, and some have passed ordinances to enact this (Miller, 1990).

At the state level, the Department of Historic Resources is responsible for providing and coordinating preservation support and services, and the Department also reviews and comments on any federally-required preservation activities and projects within the state (Miller, 1990; Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1993). On an ongoing basis the Department surveys historic property throughout the state and maintains a register of historic property. On request, the Department will provide technical assistance in planning and managing the disposition of historic properties. These services are available to any individual, organization or local government entity.

Any state agency or higher education institution carrying out a major renovation of older state property must have the project reviewed by the Department. Federal law requires Departmental review and certification of building rehabilitation projects claiming federal tax credits. The Department is qualified to accept donations of easements for preservation of historic property and, on a continuing basis, provides information

services through technical training, workshops, exhibits, lectures and publications (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1993).

Conclusion

When a master plan is developed for an older educational facility or when planning is undertaken for the acquisition of additional space, it may be worthwhile for educational administrators to consider options other than simple disposal or new construction. Preservation of older facilities can act as an enhancement to the ambiance and acceptability of older space, can make sale or lease of facilities with preservation provisions or requirements attractive to the school community and general public, and can strengthen the school system's and community's image and pride in its public facilities.

This project has identified and reviewed a number of preservation-related property planning and management options and presented representative examples of alternative strategies incorporating preservation of educational facilities. Also examined was the broader context of strategic management tools oriented toward preservation, and governmental preservation programs, legal incentives, and restrictions. The educational facilities planner will have the broader perspective needed to make meaningful recommendations under varying circumstances if he or she is knowledgeable of the options afforded by preservation-oriented facilities re-use and by disposal of surplus space with preservation restrictions as a potential consideration.

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